



April 23, 2003

West Nile Virus Newsletter

Welcome to West Nile Virus Newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of the West Nile Virus Newsletter. This is an electronic publication designed to keep you informed on issues of interest related to West Nile virus (WNV) in Washington, and provide current information to assist you in developing a response plan to WNV in your jurisdiction.

Threat Level

We remain at risk level “0”. To date we have tested four dead birds in Washington and the results were negative, and no reports of illness in horses or human. Four states (Georgia, Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana) have reported the first positive birds of the year according to U.S.G.S. reports. Positive birds also being reported in Northern Mexico and antibody positive birds in Jamaica and Dominican Republic, suggesting the virus has reached the Caribbean and is being locally transmitted.

See the [Mosquito-borne Disease Response Plan \(pdf 2.8MB\)](#) for threat level definitions.

Wetland Questions

Several comments from readers or interested parties have been received that suggest the solution to the WNV problem is simple, just drain or fill all the wetlands. Because the issue is not simple, some attention and education on the topic seems prudent at this time.

In Washington, the agency responsible for protecting the environment, which includes the wetlands of the state, is the Department of Ecology (Ecology). Their comments on this topic can be noted at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2003news/2003-046.html>. In part Ecology’s message is:

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"Whatever you do, don't drain wetlands," said Kathleen Emmett, Ecology aquatic pesticide permit coordinator. "Healthy wetlands are full of natural predators such as birds and frogs that eat mosquitoes."

Wetlands also help clean polluted waters, prevent floods and protect drinking water supplies. Mosquitoes can actually increase if wetlands are destroyed; unlike their predators, many mosquito species need only a small puddle or depression in which to breed.

Stormwater ponds in neighborhoods and housing developments can be a potential breeding ground, but "as with wetlands, the benefits of these manmade ponds far outweigh the risk of West Nile virus," Emmett said. Stormwater ponds reduce flooding, erosion, and landslides, and help protect critical habitat for salmon and other fish.

Newer ponds are being designed to absorb water faster, so they're less likely to provide habitat for mosquitoes. For older ponds, homeowners or their neighborhood associations may wish to hire a licensed professional to control mosquito larvae this spring.

Learn more about the benefit, value, and protection of wetlands at <http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/>.

Local Surveillance Efforts Expand

Mosquito surveillance training has been completed in Mason, Clallam, Jefferson, and Wahkiakum counties. These counties are all new to the statewide surveillance program this past week. Pacific and Lewis counties received additional new trapping equipment and refresher training as well.

Tom Gibbs & Monica Roppo, Department of Health (DOH) field staff, met with King County for surveillance training concentrating heavily on larval dipping.

The Samish Indian Nation in Anacortes will be coming on board this week with full surveillance training scheduled along with San Juan County Department of Health and Community Service.

The Makah Tribe will be involved in a refresher training with additional equipment the first week of May. This will be their second year of trapping.

By the end of May every county should be equipped and able to participate in local surveillance projects.

Web Page

Reminder to check the WNV Web page; www.doh.wa.gov/wnv, for the most up to date information on presence of the disease and technical tips. New this week is a section on NPDES permits.

It is hoped that these products and efforts will assist you in dealing with public concerns and assist you as you respond to this emerging disease.

Technical Tips

Here are two articles by the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides on mosquito control efforts and alternatives to pesticides from the Journal of Pesticide Reform. Although DOH materials are mentioned in both, this is not an endorsement of the articles: <http://www.pesticide.org/WNVaction.pdf>
<http://www.pesticide.org/westnilevirus.pdf>

For a very professional and comprehensive Web site on WNV try Cornell University, Center for Environment <http://www.cfe.cornell.edu/erap/WNV>.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has just released [final numbers for WNV illness for 2002](#).

Media Releases

Numerous media contacts occurred last week. Several were as a result of the DOH News Release on the NPDES permit, and interviews were given to both radio and newspaper reporters in western Washington.

King 5 Television interviewed DOH staff last Wednesday on WNV. Public Health Seattle-King County also issued a news release last week on WNV. See full story at: <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/news/03041701.htm>.

In Thurston County, a one-hour community television show was taped on WNV and is running this month on Thurston County Connection, Olympia area channel 3.

Community Comments

“[The WNV Newsletter] looks great! And thanks for all the work you are doing on the WNV. It is very much appreciated,” a central Washington health department.

Let us hear your comments on this newsletter, your needs, or things you would like to see, by sending them to Maryanne Guichard, (360) 236-3391 or maryanne.guichard@doh.wa.gov.

New Faces

Jack Lilja, former program manager and major player in developing the state's WNV program has agreed to come back from retirement and take a project position for the summer. Jack will be the internal project coordinator for the WNV grant. He will be coordinating both surveillance activities as well as the statewide WNV response plan. Welcome back, Jack. You can contact Jack at (360) 236-3366 or e-mail, jack.lilja@doh.wa.gov

DOH Contact List for West Nile Virus

General Public Toll-Free Hotline 1-866VIRUS

Publications: Brochures/Response Plan/Fact Sheets

Laura Harper, (360) 236-3380, or laura.harper@doh.wa.gov.

Surveillance: Mosquito trapping, bird surveillance

Jack Lilja (360) 236-3366, or jack.lilja@doh.wa.gov.

Surveillance: Horses, case reporting, laboratory assistance

Dr. John Grendon, (360) 236-3362, or john.grendon@doh.wa.gov.

NPDES: Training, technical assistance

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Clinical: Human case reporting, diagnosis, laboratory confirmation

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